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SUBJECT: DOD DEPUTY SECRETARY ENGLAND AND USSOUTHCOM MILITARY DEPUTY
COMMANDER GENERAL SPEARS MEET WITH PM

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England and SouthCom Military Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Glenn Spears visited Trinidad and Tobago October 14-15. They held several meetings, highlighted by a lengthy second day session with the Prime Minister. Agreement was reached to have T&T place a liaison officer at JIATF-S and all expressed pleasure at the cooperative atmosphere that characterized conversations.

¶2. (SBU) The PM expressed interest in the U.S. providing another C-26 aircraft, not requiring T&T to return two non-functional Piper aircraft, permanently stationing a USN ship in the region, allowing the purchase of a sensitive surveillance camera, and U.S. Military participation in a local air show. In response, the U.S. side noted that a different but still capable (and not export restricted) model of the surveillance camera was available, that provision of a new C-26 was unlikely, that allowing the Pipers non-return was a very real possibility, that permanent stationing of a USN vessel in the region is not now contemplated, and that the GOTT would be well-served to pursue its air show request through the relevant international organization. The Deputy Secretary also raised the GOTT's pending helicopter purchase, which two U.S. manufacturers are interested in, with the PM indicating a procurement decision is pending. End summary.

Itinerary

¶3. (SBU) DoD Deputy Secretary Gordon England, accompanied by USSOUTHCOM Military Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Glenn Spears and their respective staffs, visited October 14-15. The trip included a dinner in the Deputy Secretary's honor on October 14 following the U.S. delegation's early evening arrival. The meal was hosted by National Security Minister Martin Joseph and attended by Foreign Minister Paula Gopee-Scoon and Energy Minister Conrad Enill, among others.

¶4. (SBU) On the following day, the delegation met with Prime Minister Manning and attended a security cooperation briefing and lunch hosted by T&T Defense Force (TTDF) Commander BGEN Dillon. The DepSec also received the keys to the city of Port of Spain from Mayor Murchinson Brown in a separate ceremony. General Spears held a side meeting with GOTT officials on security concerns involving next April's Summit of the Americas (SOA). Evident in all sessions was the GOTT's desire to encourage greater USG security involvement and cooperation in the eastern Caribbean.

Prime Minister's Meeting

¶5. (SBU) Present for the GOTT at the PM's meeting were Minister Joseph, BGEN Dillon, Defense transformation lead Commodore Best, PM

Permanent Secretary Sandra Marchack, National Security Council chair Joan Messiah, Washington DATT Lt Col Anthony Phillips-Spencer and MFA Bilateral Director Sandra McIntyre-Trotman. In addition to the DepSec and General, the Ambassador attended the session, as did others from the Embassy and traveling party. (Note: Prior to the meeting, Manning, England and the Ambassador met privately for several minutes.)

Icebreaker

¶6. (SBU) The session began with both sides briefly commenting on the challenges involved in T&T hosting the April 2009 Summit of the Americas and the November 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. The PM observed his government was bringing in two cruise ships to help accommodate SOA delegates.

A Regional Approach

¶7. (SBU) Turning to substance, England recalled that when he and the PM chatted in Washington earlier this year, Manning raised a number of important issues, including the counter-narcotics fight. The PM's intention to approach such concerns from a regional perspective was spot-on, England noted. In this regard, General Spears added that USSOUTHCOM could explore options for extending the "Enduring Friendship" maritime domain awareness effort to include Trinidad and also look for other areas to cooperate.

Recent Developments

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¶8. (SBU) Manning responded that since he had met with the DepSec there had been two important regional developments. Specifically, CARICOM had signed its Maritime and Air Domain Accord and also a Common Arrest Warrant (to obviate the need for lengthy extradition procedures). These agreements reflected T&T's intent to take increasing responsibility for patrolling the eastern Caribbean to assist others (especially OECS states) even as it also drives forward the process of regional political and economic integration.

C-26s

¶9. (SBU) Moving to specifics, Manning said that in January 2009, the GOTT wanted to start up eastern Caribbean aerial patrols. He noted that the Regional Security System (RSS) now has two C-26s operating from Barbados and T&T has two. Both of Trinidad's aircraft need upgrades and were being modified, including with radar and to be enabled for nighttime operations. The idea was, in conjunction with the RSS, to have two daily patrols covering the seas from Antigua to Guyana. Ideally, though, T&T would like to have a fifth C-26 join the other four patrol aircraft. Does the U.S. have one it could make available to Trinidad, Manning queried?

¶10. (SBU) The DepSec observed that under our legislation it would be difficult for the USG to purchase a C-26 for T&T. It also was his understanding that the plane was no longer manufactured, though General Spears commented some U.S. National Guard units might still operate C-26s. England then said that our constraints on purchasing a C-26 do not extend to us helping upgrade the aircraft. If T&T procured a C-26 on its own, we could look at assisting in its upgrade. Nonetheless, the DepSec said we would consider the GOTT C-26 request, but advised that Trinidad's best route would be to look for a plane it could purchase on its own.

¶11. (SBU) Manning implied this was not a road T&T was eager to go down. The C-26 is not widely used in the Caribbean, he explained. This made difficult finding pilots who could fly it and technicians who could maintain the plane. As such, the GOTT only planned to keep its current C-26s in operation for three more years, replacing them with the more widely used Bombardier Dash-8. The PM said his government was already talking to "the Canadians" about the Dash.

Pipers

¶12. (SBU) Before moving on, the PM related that the GOTT has two Piper Navajos given to it by the U.S. on a ten-year lease expiring in 2009. The craft are not serviceable and getting them into shape to return to the U.S. might be impossible and, in any case, would be very costly -- money that could be better spent on upgrading T&T's other security assets. The PM asked to be "released" from this return responsibility. Answering, the U.S. delegation noted the planes had been provided under our INL program and, while we would need to check with Washington, it was possible we would be able to grant this request. (Note: The craft are not serviceable. We are in touch with INL to seek approval on their non-return.)

A Permanent Ship

¶13. (SBU) Manning then asked about surface ship assets. Some other non-Caribbean nations have a permanent regional naval presence. It would be beneficial, the PM continued, if the U.S. could station a ship in the eastern Caribbean. Manning said he had made a similar request to the British, who have a ship in the area only part of the year. Opining that the U.S. has much more influence with HMG, Manning further suggested Washington second Trinidad's request to the UK. The PM concluded by saying that an expanded naval presence was needed since pressure on traffickers and others to the west was leading them to come east. Absent a full-time U.S. ship (he also threw in the Canadians along with the British for good measure), complete coverage of the region would be impossible.

¶14. (SBU) General Spears responded that the U.S. Fourth Fleet has no ships permanently assigned. Instead, the Fourth Fleet and JIATF-S look to coordinate whatever assets the U.S. places in the region in conjunction with our partners. The DepSec further added the real question is not whose assets are being deployed, but is there enough and are they being properly coordinated.

¶15. (SBU) In that case, Manning said, how can T&T get a "seat at the (JIATF-S) table?" Minister Joseph noted said this was already under discussion. General Spears underscored that a T&T JIATF-S

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liaison "could happen tomorrow." The RSS and other nations could also seek liaison officials. England emphasized it would be very positive for the GOTT to place a liaison officer at JIATF-S and welcomed agreement on this as an important step forward in our joint security efforts.

Helicopters

¶16. (SBU) The DepSec noted the GOTT is in the process of procuring four helicopters, saying this would provide a welcome boost to T&T's capabilities and recalling there were bidders such as AgustaWestland. The PM answered affirmatively, adding the helicopters will be armed and a competition between manufacturers to sell them is under way. The PM said a European company was in the lead, offering a very good product.

¶17. (SBU) The problem, though, was availability -- helicopter manufacturers are fully booked up and getting the four aircraft in a timely manner would be difficult. Mentioning Sikorsky, the PM asked for USG assistance to jump the production queue if an American manufacturer was chosen. The DepSec said that if the GOTT chose a U.S. manufactured helicopter, the USG could encourage the private firm to accelerate delivery. The PM concluded this portion of the conversation by saying that the GOTT needed to finalize its decision on which helicopter it would purchase and, if a U.S. model were chosen, he would be back in touch with us. (Note: During the helicopter discussion, it was unclear whether the PM was thinking of AgustaWestland as solely a European firm and Sikorsky as the purely U.S. competitor; AW would build the helicopters in Philadelphia and its North American division is incorporated in Delaware.)

Illustrating this possibility, at one point the PM said he thought the leading European model was the A-139, a craft -- actually the AW-139 -- AgustaWestland produces. The PM, though, was speaking of the favored model without notes and it was clear he was trying to remember the craft designation, being unsure of it.)

A Camera for the Airship

¶18. (SBU) The PM then turned to Minister Joseph to raise the GOTT concern that it has been unable to procure from the U.S. a sensitive surveillance camera it wishes to mount on its airship for law enforcement purposes. The DepSec noted there is equipment we cannot export due to our laws, regulations and security requirements. The Ambassador added we had previously discussed this issue with the GOTT, suggesting it look to a less sophisticated camera model that would suit its needs. (Note: We will be passing the GOTT information on camera options again.)

¶19. (SBU) The PM said he was unaware of this and, if the less sophisticated camera was suitable, it could solve the problem. Nonetheless, he then asked if the U.S. had satellite surveillance capability it could direct over T&T and share with the government. The DepSec and General Spears replied we did not have such regional coverage and suggested the GOTT contact commercial satellite imagery providers. Manning closed this portion of the conversation saying he would leave the request on the table and be interested in information on commercial providers. England said such information/conversations could be pursued through JIATF-S. (Note: During the TTDF briefing later in the day, BGEN Dillon raised the GOTT desire for yet another law enforcement surveillance system and was advised that Trinidad needs to update its laws prior to USG consideration of that request.)

Air Show

¶20. (SBU) As the meeting was wrapping up, Manning raised the longstanding GOTT desire to have the U.S. participate in a local May 2009 air show. Specifically, the PM asked for an aerial acrobatic team, saying U.S. participation was the linchpin of the event. England responded that while we might be able to provide a demonstration aircraft next year, our air teams are booked years in advance. General Spears then suggested the event be delayed and Trinidad work through the International Council of Air Shows (ICAS) to set a suitable date. The Embassy MLO office could help pass information on how to move forward in this regard, he said. The PM indicated he was flexible on dates and could approach ICAS.

¶21. (U) This cable has been cleared by DoD and USSOUTHCOM.

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